

Hallelujah Chaos III

The Handel & Haydn Society · April 15, 1978 · Horticultural Hall · Boston

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Gloriana

An opera commissioned for the Coronation of Elizabeth II, June 1953

Words by William Plomer

Music by Benjamin Britten

Act II: Scene 1—*The Masque*

[Lord Essex is on progress with her Majesty Elizabeth I (Gloriana) in the city of Norwich. A masque, played in the Guildhall, has been devised for their entertainment. The scene is a leafy bower, presided over by the Spirit of the Masque. The characters include a sunburnt and heroic-looking young man representing Time, a young woman of placid beauty representing Concord, young country girls, rustic swains and fishermen. All present their tokens of homage to the Queen in six choral dances.]

Spirit of the Masque

The Masque begins.

Masquers

Melt the earth to sea, sea flow to air,
And air fly into fire!
The elements at Gloriana's chair,
Mingle in tuneful choir.

Spirit of the Masque

And now...we summon from this leafy bower
The demi-god that must appear!
'Tis Time.

[First Dance. Time]

Masquers

Yes, he is Time,
Lusty and blithe!
Time is at his apogee,
Although you thought to see
A bearded ancient with a scythe.

No reaper he
That cries 'Take heed!'
Time is at his apogee,
Young and strong, in his prime;
Behold the sower of the seed!

Spirit of the Masque

Time could not sow
unless he had a spouse
to bless his work
and give it life—
Concord, his loving wife!

[Second Dance. Concord.]

Masquers

Concord is here
Our days to bless
And this our land to endue
With plenty, peace and happiness.

Concord and Time
Each needeth each:
The ripest fruit hangs where
Not one, but only two can reach,

Spirit of the Masque

Now Time with Concord dances
This island doth rejoice:
And woods and waves and waters
Make echo to our voice.

[Third Dance. Time and Concord.]

Masquers

From springs of bounty
Through this county
Streams abundant
Of thanks shall flow!

Where life was scanty
Fruits of plenty
Swell resplendent
From earth below!

No Greek nor Roman
Queenly woman
Knew such favour
From Heav'n above.

As she whose presence
Is our pleasure
Gloriana
Hath all our love!

Spirit of the Masque And now, country maidens,
bring a tribute of flowers
to the flower of princes all.

[Fourth Dance. Country Girls.]

Masquers Sweet flag and cuckoo flower,
Cowslip and columbine,
King cups and sops-in-wine,
Flower-de-luce,
And calaminth,
Harebell and hyacinth,
Myrtle and bay with Rosemary between,
Norfolk's own garlands for her Queen.

Spirit of the Masque Behold a troop of rustic swains,
bringing from the waves and pastures
the fruits of their toil...

[Fifth Dance. Rustics and Fishermen.]

Masquers From fen and meadow
In rushy baskets
They bring ensamples
Of all they grow:

In earthen dishes
Their deep-sea fishes;
Yearling fleeces,
Woven baskets;

New cream and junkets
And rustic trinkets
On wicker flaskets
Their country largess—
The best they know!

Spirit of the Masque Led by Time and Concord,
let all unite and homage to Gloriana,
our hope of peace,
our flower of grace.

[Sixth Dance. Final Dance of Homage.]

Masquers These tokens of our love receiving,
O take them, Princess great and dear,
From Norwich, city you are leaving,
That you afar may feel us near.

Performing Artists

Spirit of the Masque : Mark Hagerty

Time: Paul Evans

Concord: Lea Housmann

Country Maidens: Sally Kornkven, Ronna Kress

Rustic Swains: John Wilson, Paul Evans

Masquers: Chorus of the Handel & Haydn Society

Piano: Gary Wedow

Conductor: Thomas Dunn

Technical Artistry

Choreography: John Wilson

Lighting: Anthony Quintavalla

Program Note

The Masque was a popular form of entertainment at the court of Elizabeth I. A forerunner of English opera, its emphasis on staging and dance rather than music was an important influence, as the simpler Renaissance air and spoken dialogue gave way to the more complex Baroque aria and recitative. Queen Elizabeth was fond of this essentially French style of entertainment. She was both passionate dancer and skilled musician, so the inclusion of a masque in a modern opera based on her life is almost obligatory.

For his interpretation of the Masque in Benjamin Britten's opera *Gloriana*, John Wilson has incorporated dance movement from several centuries into his choreography. Elements of the original court dance combine harmoniously with classical ballet and modern dance to complement the musical gestures of these choral dances (canon figures prominently in two). The Spirit of the Masque, a *Chronista* role sung by the tenor soloist, and the parts of the Masquers, sung by the Chorus of the Society, do not take part in the dance, but provide the backdrop against which the movement takes place.

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Mr. Mark Hagerty as tenor soloist;

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